
From: Antya Miller [antya@gonorthshore.org]
Sent: Thursday, October 11, 2012 4:31 PM
To:
Cc:
Subject: Zoning and Planning Committee Testimony
Importance: High

Aloha Chair Anderson and Members of the Zoning and Planning Committee:

I am opposed to approving the Ewa Development Plan which includes the development of prime agriculture land with R1 water for housing aka Ho'opili. I am also opposed to the building of a steel-on- steel-rail system starting in the middle of the most productive ag lands on Oahu. Oahu cannot afford to lose this most precious prime ag land nor this boondoggle of a rail system. Please see editorial by David Shapiro in the Star Advertiser on October 10th. http://www.staradvertiser.com/newspremium/volcanicashpremium/20121010_Rails_operating_cost_must_be_on_id=173437491&c=n

This issue should be revisited after the election. Enough is enough. The taxpayers of this island are overtaxed. Do not make things worse.

Thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony.

Mahalo,
Antya Miller
52-Year Resident of Haleiwa and
Member of North Shore Neighborhood Board #27

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Rail's operating cost must be on table, not under it
POSTED: 01:30 a.m. HST, Oct 10, 2012

StarAdvertiser.com

By David Shapiro

The city is trumpeting a federally sponsored study by Porter & Associates Inc. concluding that the \$5.26 billion Oahu rail project is financially sound.

It's good to have a reasonably credible view that the numbers add up on the construction side, even if our big government construction jobs seldom run within 10 percent of plan as the consultant assumes.

Where the study raises thorny questions is on the operational side — how we'll pay for running the train once it's built.

The consultant projected total operating costs of the city's transit system — TheBus, Handi-Van and rail — will consume 19.1 percent of city tax collections in 2021, up from a historic level of 10 percent.

The concern is, when in the process did we decide to radically shift city priorities and double the amount of the annual budget devoted to public transportation? When was the community discussion about this?

The truth is we've never really had the discussion.

City officials have evaded forthright answers about rail operating costs, on the apparent theory that if they duck the issue until the train is built, taxpayers will have no choice but to pay to operate it no matter what the cost.

Obviously, doubling public transportation costs to a fifth of the budget will mean either raising taxes or much less money for other city programs.

It's astounding we've gotten this far — issuing major contracts, spending hundreds of millions of dollars, starting construction — without a frank public examination of operational impacts.

Rail proponents, who demand that the other side explain every nickel of a proposed \$1.5 billion bus-based transit alternative, offer few specifics on how the city will pay for doubling the cost of transit services after rail.

Rail advocates are loathe to admit the possibility of train-related tax increases, so they talk vaguely about reshaping city priorities to allow budget cuts for "other things."

City taxpayers deserve to know much more upfront about what those "other things" are.

Keep in mind that the Carlisle administration this year made unpopular cuts to existing bus service because the budget was tight and they found no "other things" to cut.

If elected leaders can't find other cuts to cover the modest cost of maintaining existing bus service at old levels, how will they possibly find enough "other things" to cut to pay for doubling the cost of transit services nine years from now?

City leaders owed taxpayers an open discussion from the start on such a massive shift in budget priorities instead of trying to sneak it through as a "fait accompli."

Mistrust over their pattern of running from transparency on tough choices is why a rail project that once seemed in the bag is fighting for its life.

Reach David Shapiro at volcanicash@gmail.com or blog.volcanicash.net.

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